

CLAIMS

*Sub A2*

1. A process for accessing a virtual table comprising:
  1. identifying a data source;
  2. associating a record within said data source to a virtual table, said virtual table
  3. having a different column signature than said record;
  4. accessing said record; and
  5. logically populating said virtual table with said record.
2. The process of claim 1 in which said record is accessed based upon data description information for said record.
3. The process of claim 2 in which said data description information is located in said record.
4. The process of claim 2 in which said data description information is located external to said record.
5. The process of claim 2 in which said data description information is located in a second virtual table.
6. The process of claim 1 in which said data source is a database table.

7. The process of claim 1 in which said data source is an operating system file.
8. The process of claim 1 in which a user-defined function is used to access said virtual table.
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9. The process of claim 1 further comprising:
- identifying a second data source;
- associating a second record within said second data source to said virtual table;
- accessing said second record; and
- 10 logically populating said virtual table with said second record.
10. The process of claim 9 in which said record populates a row in said virtual table, said second record also populates said row.
- 15 11. The process of claim 9 in which said record populates a row in said virtual table, said second record populates a second row in said virtual table.
12. The process of claim 1 in which said record comprises a first and a second column, both said first and said second columns used to populate a single column in said virtual
- 20 table.
13. The process of claim 1 in which a data manipulation operation is performed against

said virtual table.

- 14: The process of claim 13 in which said data manipulation operation comprises a SQL arithmetic operation.

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15. The process of claim 13 further comprising:  
identifying a second data source;

associating a second record within said second data source to a second virtual table;  
accessing said second record;

- 10 logically populating said second virtual table with said second record wherein said data manipulation operation operates against both said virtual table and said second virtual table.

15. The process of claim 15 in which said data manipulation operation comprises a database join operation.

17. A computer program product that includes a medium usable by a processor, the medium having stored thereon a sequence of instructions which, when executed by said processor, causes said processor to execute a process for accessing a virtual table, said process comprising:

identifying a data source;  
associating a record within said data source to a virtual table;

accessing said record; and  
logically populating said virtual table with said record.